

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-23. (Canceled).

24. (Currently Amended) A tomato composition obtained from tomato juice or tomato passatas having the following composition in percentage by weight:

- dry residue 5.5 - 20%,
- water 94.5-80%,

100% being the sum of the two components,

wherein the amount of water-insoluble solids and water-soluble solids in the dry residue range in percentage by weight as follows:

- water-insoluble solids from 18% to 30%~~70%~~,
- water-soluble solids from 82% to 70%~~30%~~.

25. (Currently Amended) A tomato composition according to claim 24, wherein the amount of water-insoluble solids and water-soluble solids in the dry residue ranges in percentage by weight as follows:

- water-insoluble solids from 20% to 30%~~50%~~,
- water-soluble solids from 80% to 70%~~50%~~.

26. (Canceled).

27. (Currently Amended) A ~~tomato~~ composition comprising animal and/or vegetable fats and the tomato composition according to claim 24 or 25 ~~24, 25 or 26 in admixture with animal and/or vegetable fats~~

28. (Currently Amended) A ~~tomato~~ composition according to claim 27, wherein said animal and/or vegetable fats are solid at room temperature.
29. (Currently Amended) A ~~tomato~~ composition according to claim 27, wherein said animal and/or vegetable fats are liquid at room temperature.
30. (Currently Amended) A ~~tomato~~ composition according to claim 28, wherein said animal and/or vegetable fats comprise butter or margarine.
31. (Currently Amended) A ~~tomato~~ composition according to claim 29, wherein said animal and/or vegetable fats comprise olive oil.
32. (Currently Amended) A ~~tomato~~ composition according to claim 27, wherein said animal and/or vegetable fats comprise soft, hard or grated cheese.
- 33-34. (Canceled)
35. (Currently Amended) A tomato composition according to claim 24 or 25~~33~~, wherein the amount of fats and/or oil in the composition, based upon the weight of the tomato composition, ranges from 10% to 25% by weight ~~based on the weight of the starting tomato composition~~, the amount of soft cheese ranges from 50% to 300% by weight and the amount of hard and/or grated cheese ranges from 10% to 25% by weight.
36. (Canceled)
37. (Previously Presented) A method of saucing food which comprises mixing the tomato composition of claim 24 with said food.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein said food is pasta, meat, fish or vegetables.
39. (Previously Presented) A ready-to-use sauce for food comprising the tomato composition of claim 24.
40. (Previously Presented) A ready-to-use sauce for food comprising the composition of claim 27.
41. (Previously Presented) A composition comprising an essence aroma and/or preservative for food and the composition of claim 24.
42. (Currently Amended) A composition comprising an essence aroma and/or preservative for food and the ~~tomato~~ composition of claim 27.
43. (Previously Presented) Food comprising the tomato composition of claim 24.
44. (Currently Amended) Food comprising the ~~tomato~~ composition of claim 27.
45. (New) A tomato composition prepared from tomato juice previously treated to inactivate enzymes or tomato passatas by a process comprising separation of tomato serum from water insoluble solids using a separation solid-liquid apparatus wherein the suspension to be filtered is maintained under stirring at an angular speed from 1 rpm to 20 rpm, the stirrer being of a shape to convey the suspension toward the central axis of the apparatus.
46. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein the apparatus for separating the liquid from a tomato suspension is a sieve maintained under an oscillating motion, the oscillations being from 1 to 20 oscillations/min.

47. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein sterile conditions are used or the final tomato product undergoes a sterilization process.

48. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein the process is conducted at temperatures in the range of 5°C-25°C, at atmospheric pressure, or at pressures slightly higher than atmospheric pressure, from 760 mm Hg (0.101 MPa) up to 900 mm Hg (0.120 MPa) or by applying pressures slightly lower than atmospheric pressure, down to 450 mm Hg (0.06 MPa).

49. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein a separation solid-liquid apparatus constituted of a vessel having walls with slots or with holes is employed, wherein the width of the slots or the diameter of the holes is not greater than 0.1 mm, the slot length ranging from 30 cm to 2 meters, said vessel having a cylindrical section, the separator being equipped with a mechanical stirrer, wherein the distance between the separator walls and the stirrer blades is from 0.5 to 2 cm.

50. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein a concave- or flat-shaped sieve, having hole diameters or slot widths not greater than 0.1 mm is operated at atmospheric pressure.

51. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein the equipment employed comprises a cylinder constituted by food grade stainless steel wherein the walls have openings or slots formed by woven wire cloth, or by screens, or said walls have holes, being the width of the openings of the slots, or hole diameters not greater than 0.1 mm, said cylinder having an inner stirrer in the form of an archimedean screw revolving free in the fixed cylinder, or the cylinder is a rotating tube wound helically about a cylindrical axis.

52. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein the rotation of the moving part is at an angular speed of 2-10 rpm.

53. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 51, wherein the cylinder is in a horizontal position, and has a diameter ranging from 30 cm to 1 meter or a length from 2 meters to 20 meters for apparatus working in a discontinuous way or about 20 meters for apparatus which works in a continuous way.

54. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein the separation solid-liquid apparatus is provided with slots having a width or holes having a diameter not higher than 0.5 mm when treating tomato suspensions derived from partially ripened tomatoes.

55. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein the tomato composition has a content of water-insoluble solids in the dry residue from 18% to 30%.

56. (New) A tomato composition prepared according to the process of claim 45, wherein to tomato compositions having a content of water-insoluble solids in the dry residue in the range from 20% to 30% is added lyophilized or cryoconcentrated serum, or serum concentrated by an osmosis membrane or by evaporation under vacuum.

57. (New) A process for the separation of tomato juice serum from a tomato suspension by using a separation solid-liquid apparatus wherein the suspension to be filtered is maintained under stirring at an angular speed from 1 rpm to 20 rpm, the stirrer being of a shape to convey the suspension toward the central axis of the apparatus, or wherein there is no stirrer and the apparatus rotates.

58. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein the apparatus for separating the liquid from a tomato suspension is a sieve maintained under an oscillating motion, the oscillations being from 1 to 20 oscillations/min.

59. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein sterile conditions are used or the final tomato product undergoes a sterilization process.

60. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein the process is conducted at temperatures in the range of 5°C-25°C, at atmospheric pressure, or at pressures slightly higher than atmospheric pressure, from 760 mm Hg (0.101 MPa) up to 900 mm Hg (0.120 MPa) or by applying pressures slightly lower than atmospheric pressure, down to 450 mm Hg (0.06 MPa).

61. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein a separation solid-liquid apparatus constituted of a vessel having walls with slots or with holes is employed, wherein the width of the slots or the diameter of the holes is not greater than 0.1 mm, the slot length ranging from 30 cm to 2 meters, said vessel having a cylindrical section, the separator being equipped with a mechanical stirrer, wherein the distance between the separator walls and the stirrer blades is from 0.5 to 2 cm.

62. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein a concave- or flat-shaped sieve, having hole diameters or slot widths not greater than 0.1 mm is operated at atmospheric pressure.

63. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein the equipment employed comprises a cylinder constituted by food grade stainless steel wherein the walls have openings or slots formed by woven wire cloth, or by screens, or said walls have holes, being the width of the openings of the slots, or hole diameters not greater than 0.1 mm, said cylinder having an inner stirrer in the form of an archimedean screw revolving free in the fixed cylinder, or the cylinder is a rotating tube wound helically about a cylindrical axis.

64. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein the rotation of the moving part is at an angular speed of 2-10 rpm.

65. (New) A process according to claim 63, wherein the cylinder is in a horizontal position, and has a diameter ranging from 30 cm to 1 meter or a length from 2 meters to 20 meters for apparatus working in a discontinuous way or about 20 meters for apparatus which works in a continuous way.

66. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein the separation solid-liquid apparatus is provided with slots having a width or holes having a diameter not higher than 0.5 mm when treating tomato suspensions derived from partially ripened tomatoes.

67. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein the tomato composition has a content of water-insoluble solids in the dry residue from 18% to 30%.

68. (New) A process according to claim 57, wherein to tomato compositions having a content of water-insoluble solids in the dry residue in the range from 20% to 30% is added lyophilized or cryoconcentrated serum, or serum concentrated by an osmosis membrane or by evaporation under vacuum.